

Mormon Connection

Checking my emails the other day, I noticed one from FamilySearch claiming to have found a relative's immigration record from Liverpool to New Orleans. Family Search has a bad habit of jumping on a name of roughly the correct period and proclaiming it a connection, so I was a bit sceptical, however 'Elizabeth West, 1799-1869' sounded familiar. I duly checked, and sure enough, she was a younger sister of my 3x great grandmother Mary Smith (nee West) from Fillongley in Warwickshire.

What follows is an edited account, from American family memoirs, of how Elizabeth West converted



to the Mormon faith and travelled to Salt Lake City, Utah, along with several members of her family.

'Elizabeth West was born on 1st March 1799 in Fillongley, Warwickshire, to William West and Elizabeth Ranger, and was christened on 17th March 1799. Her parents had a daughter Mary [my direct ancestor], sons John and Thomas, another Thomas as the first died young, followed by Elizabeth,

then four other sisters, Catherine, Ann, Hannah and Lydia.

Elizabeth married George Benjamin Craner, of the neighbouring village of Maxstoke, on 8th February 1819 in Fillongley, both aged nineteen. They went to live at Hall End, Maxstoke, where they had twelve children between 1819 and 1844 – Elizabeth, Mary, George Benjamin, Joseph, Thomas, George, William, Harriet Ann, Abraham, Ann, John and Martha – George Benjamin and William died in childhood.

In 1845, Elizabeth listened to the Latter Day Saints (LDS) missionaries who were teaching in Maxstoke. Brigham Young [the founder of Salt Lake City and first governor of Utah] had taught there in 1840 and many of the village had converted. He had stayed at Skye Cottage, near the Craners, and villagers still talk (in 2016) of Preachers Barn and Preachers Tree where people had gathered to hear the missionaries. Elizabeth, her husband and several of her children were baptised in the Mormon faith in 1845 and 1846, and the decision was made to prepare to go to America. Their son George went to Utah first in 1851, working hard there for three years to send money back for his family to follow. On 22nd February 1854, George Benjamin and Elizabeth Craner, with children Harriet 19, Ann 15, John 11 and Martha 9, left Liverpool on the ship 'Windermere' with 477 other converts under the direction of Elder Daniel Garn. They endured seasickness, fierce storms, a fire in the galley, scarce provisions and small pox affecting 40 passengers and killing ten. They arrived at New Orleans on 23rd April 1854 after 61 days at sea. Next they boarded the steamboat 'Great Tower' to travel on to St Louis, Missouri, a thousand miles up the Mississippi River, where they would then board the steamboat 'Sonora' to Kansas City. On the way cholera broke out, killing 42

people, including George Benjamin Craner who died on 18th May 1854. He was buried in a grave with two others on the plains of Kansas.

The company moved on to Atchison, Kansas, where they stayed for five weeks to get supplies and prepare for their journey across the plains. They started on 2nd July, again under the leadership of Elder Daniel Garn, enduring dust, mud, a stampede, a skirmish with Indians and heavy rains. President Brigham Young sent a group from Salt Lake City when they were about 100 miles away, to give them fresh teams and provisions. One of their number was Alexander Harris who would marry Elizabeth's daughter, Harriet, the following year. They arrived on Salt Lake City on 1st October 1854. The family then travelled west to Tooele, where they were reunited with George, and stayed in the log cabin he had built for them all. Elizabeth lived with George, and later his family, for the remainder of her life, passing away on 8th April 1869.'